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LETTER

TO

Mr. Harding the Printer,

Upon Occasion of a

PARAGRAPH

IN HIS

News - Paper

of Aug. 1st.

Relating to Mr. Wood's Half-pence.

By M. B. Drapier.
AUTHOR of the LETTER to the
SHOP-KEEPERS, &c.

DUBLIN : Printed by J. Harding
in Molesworth's-Court. 1724

Jonathan Swift

A

LETTER, &c.

SIR,



N your News-Letter of the 1st. Instant there is a Paragraph Dated from London July 25th, relating to Woods's Half-pence; whereby it is plain what I foretold in my Letter to the Shop-keepers, &c.

that this vile Fellow would never be at Rest, and that the Danger of our Ruin approaches nearer, and therefore the Kingdom requires NEW and FRESH WARNING; however I take that Paragraph to be, in a great Measure, an Imposition upon the Publick, at least I hope so, because I am informed that Woods is generally his own News-Writer. I cannot but observe from that Paragraph that this Publick Enemy of ours, not satisfied to Ruin us with his Trash, takes every Occasion to treat this Kingdom with the utmost Contempt. He Represents Several of our Merchants and Traders upon Examination before a Committee of a Council, agreeing that there was the utmost Necessity of Copper-Money here, before his Patent, so that several Gentlemen have been forced to Tally with their Workmen and give them Bits of Cards Sealed and Subscribed with their Names. What then?

If a Physician prescribes to a Patient a *Dram* of Physick, shall a Rascal Apothecary Cram him with a *Pound*, and mix it up with *Poyson*? And is not a Landlord's Hand and Seal to his own Labourers a better Security for Five or Ten Shillings, than Woods's Brass Seven Times below the Real Value, can be to the Kingdom for an Hundred and Four thousand Pounds?

But who are these *MERCHANTS and TRADERS* of Ireland that make this Report of the utmost *Necessity we are under of Copper-Money*? They are only a few Betrayers of their Country, Confederates with Woods, from whom they are to purchase a great Quantity of his Coyn, perhaps at half Value, and Vend it among us to the Ruin of the Publick, and their own private Advantage. Are not these excellent Witnesses, upon whose Integrity the Fate of a Kingdom must depend, who are Evidence in their own Cause, and Shaters in this Work of Iniquity?

If we could have deserved the Liberty of Coyning for our selves as we formerly did, and why we have not *is every Body's Wonder* *as well as mine*. Ten thousand Pounds might have been Coyned here in *Dublin* of only one Fifth below the Intrinsick Value, and this Sum, with the Stock of Half-pence we then had would have been sufficient: But Woods by his Emissaries, Enemies to God and this Kingdom, hath taken Care to Buy up as many of our old Half-pence as he could, and from thence the present Want of Change arises; to remove which, by Mr. Woods his Remedy, would be to Cure a Scratch on the

Finger by Cutting off the Arm. But supposing there were not one Farthing of Change in the whole Nation, I will maintain, that Five and Twenty Thousand Pounds would be a Sum fully sufficient to answer all our Occasions. I am no inconsiderable Shop-Keeper in this Town, I have discoursed with several of my own and other Trades, with many Gentlemen both of City and Country, and also with great Numbers of Farmers, Cottagers, and Labourers, who all agree that two Shillings in Change for Every Family, wou'd be more than necessary in all Dealings. Now by the largest Computation (even before that grievous Discouragement of Agriculture, which hath so much lessened our Numbers) the Souls in this Kingdom are computed to be One Million and a half, which allowing but Six to a Family makes Two hundred and Fifty thousand Families, and consequently Two Shillings to each Family will amount only to Five and Twenty thousand Pounds, whereas this *Honest Liberal Hard ware Man VVoods* would impose upon us above *Four Times* that Sum.

Your Paragraph relates further, that Sir Isaac Newton Reported an Assay taken at the Tower of VVoods's Metal, by which it appears, that VVoods had in all Respects performed his Contract. His Contract ! with whom? Was it with the Parliament or People of Ireland? Are not they to be the Purchasers? But they Detest, Abhor, and Reject it, as Corrupt, Fraudulent, mingled with Dirt and Trash. Upon which he grows Angry, goes to Law, and will impose his Goods upon us by Force.

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But your News Letter says that an *Assay* was made of the Coyn. How impudent and insupportable is this? *Woods* takes Care to Coyn a Dozen or Two Half-pence of good Metal, sends them to the *Tower* and they are approved, and these must answer all that he hath already Coyned or shall Coyn for the Future. It is true indeed, that a Gentleman often sends to my Shop for a *Pattern* of Stuff, I cut it fairly off, and if he likes it, he comes or sends and compates the *Pattern* with the whole Piece, and probably we come to a Bargain. But if I were to Buy an Hundred Sheep, and the *Grazier* should bring me one single Weather fat and well Fleeced by Way of *Pattern*, and expect the same Price round for the whole Hundred, without suffering me to see them before he was payed, or giving me good Security to restore my Money for those that were *Lean* or *Shorn* or *Scabby*, I would be none of his Customer. I have heard of a Man who had a Mind to Sell his House, and therefore carried a Piece of *Brick* in his Pocket, which he shewed as a *Pattern* to encourage Purchasers; And this is directly the Case in Point with Mr. *Woods's Assay*.

The next Part of the Paragraph contains Mr. *Woods's* voluntary Proposals for preventing any future Objections or Apprehensions.

His first Proposal is, that whereas he hath already Coyned Seventeen thousand Pounds, and has Copper prepared to make it up Fourty thousand Pounds he will be content to Coyn no more, unless the *EXIGENCES OF TRADE REQUIRE IT*, though his Patent empowers him to Coyn a far greater Quantity.

To which if I were to Answer it should be thus: Let Mr. Woods and his Crew of *Founders* and *Tinkers* Coyn on till there is not an old Kettle left in the Kingdom, let them Coyn old Leather, Tobacco-pipe Clay or the Dirc in the Streets, and call their Trumpery by what Name they please from a Guinea to a Farthing, we are not under any Concern to know how he and his Tribe or Accomplices think fit to employ themselves. But I hope and trust, that we are all to a Man fully determined to have nothing to do with him or his Ware.

The King has given him a Patent to Coyn Half-pence, but hath not obliged us to take them, and I have already shewn in my *Letter to the Shop-keepers, &c.* that the Law hath not left it in the Power of the *Prerogative* to compel the Subject to take any Money, beside Gold and Silver of the Right Sterling and Standard.

Woods further proposes, (if I understand him right, for his Expressions are Dubious) that he will not Coyn above *Fourty Thousand Pounds*, unless **THE EXIGENCES OF TRADE REQUIRE IT.** First, I observe that this Sum of *Fourty Thousand Pounds* is almost double to what I proved to be sufficient for the whole Kingdom, although we had not one of our old Half-pence left. Again I ask, who is to be Judge when the **EXIGENCES OF TRADE REQUIRE IT?** Without Doubt he means himself, for as to us of this poor Kingdom, who must be utterly Ruined if his Project should succeed, we were never *Once consulted* till the Matter was

was over, and he will Judge of our EXIGENCES by his own; neither will these be ever at an End till he and his Accomplices will think they have enough; And it now appears that he will not be content with all our Gold and Silver, but intends to Buy up our Goods and Manufactures with the same Coyn.

I shall not enter into Examination of the Prices for which he now proposes to Sell his Half-pence or what he calls his Copper, by the Pound; I have said enough of it in my former Letter, and it hath likewise been consider'd by others. It is certain that by his own first Computation, we were to pay Three Shillings for what was intrinsically worth but One, although it had been of the true Weight and Standard for which he pretend-ed to have Contracted; but there is so great a Difference both in Weight and Badness in several of his Coyns that some of them have been Nine in Ten below the Intrinsick Va-lue, and most of them Six or Seven.

His last Proposal being of a peculiar Strain and Nature, deserves to be very particularly consider'd, both on Account of the Matter and the Style. It is as follows.

Lastly, in Consideration of the direful Appre-hensions which prevail in Ireland, that Mr. Woods will by such Coynage drain them of their Gold and Silver, he proposes to take their Manu-factories in exchange, and that no Person be OBLIGED to receive more than Five pence Half-penny at one payment.

First, Observe this little Impudent Hard-ware-Man turning into ridicule the Direful Apprehensions of a whole Kingdom, priding him-self

self as the Cause of them, and daring to prescribe what no King of *England* ever attempted, how far a whole Nation shall be obliged to take his Brass Coyn. And he has Reason to Insult; for sure there was never an Example in History, of a great Kingdom kept in Awe for above a Year in daily Dread of utter Destruction, not by a powerful Invader at the Head of Twenty thousand Men, not by a Plague or a Famine, not by a Tyrannical Prince (for we never had one more Gracious) or a corrupt Administration, but by one single, diminutive, insignificant, Mechanick.

But to go on. To Remove our DIRE-FULL APPREHENSIONS that he will Drain us of our Gold and Silver by his Ceynage: This little Arbitrary Mock-Monarch most Graciously offers to take our Manufactures in Exchange. Are our Irish Understandings indeed so low in his Opinion? Is not this the very Misery we complain of? That his cursed Project will put us under the Necessity of Selling our Goods for what is equal to Nothing. How would such a Proposal Sound from *France* or *Spain* or any other Country we deal with, if they should offer to deal with us only upon this Condition, that we should take their Money at Ten times higher than the intrinsick Value? Does Mr. Woods think, for Instance that we will Sell him a Stone of Wool for a Parcel of his Counters not worth Six-pence, when we can send it to *England* and receive as many Shillings in Gold and Silver! Surely there was never heard such a Compound of Impudence, Villany and Folly.

His Proposals Conclude with perfect *High Treason*. He promises, that no Person shall be **OBLGED** to receive more than Five-pence Half-penny of his Coyn in one Payment; By which it is plain that he pretends to **OBLIGE** every Subject in this Kingdom to take so much in every Payment, if it be offered; whereas his Patent *Obliges* no Man, nor can the Prerogative by Law claim such a Power, as I have often observed; so that here Mr. Woods takes upon him the *Entire Legislature*, and an absolute Dominion over the Properties of the whole Nation.

Good God! Who are this Wretch's *Advisers*? Who are his *Supporters, Abettors, Encouragers or Sharers*? Mr. Woods will **OBLIGE** me to take Five-pence Half-penny of his Brass in every Payment. And I will Shoot Mr. Woods and his Deputies through the Head, like *High-way Men* or *House-breakers*, if they dare to force one Farthing of their Coyn upon me in the Payment of an Hundred Pounds. It is no Loss of Honour to submit to the *Lyon*, but who, with the Figure of a *Man*, can think with Patience of being Devoured alive by a *Rat*. He has laid a Tax upon the People of *Ireland* of Seventeen Shillings at least in the Pound; a Tax I say, not only upon Lands, but Interest-Money, Goods, Manufactures, the Hire of Handicrafts-men, Labourers and Servants. Shop Keepers look to your selves. Woods will oblige and force you to take Five-pence Half-penny of his Trash in every Payment, and many of you receive Twenty, Thirty Fourty Payments in a Day, or else you can hardly find Bread:

And

And pray consider how much that will amount to in a Year; Twenty Times Five-pence Half-penny is Nine Shillings and Two-pence, which is above an Hundred and Sixty Pounds a Year, whereof you will be Losers of at least One hundred and Fourty Pounds by taking your Payments in his Money. If any of you be content to Deal with Mr. Woods on such Conditions they may. But for my own Particular, *Let his Money perish with him.* If the Famous Mr. Hambden rather chose to go to Prison, than pay a few Shillings to King Charles Ist. without Authority of Parliament, I will rather chuse to be *Hanged* than have all my Substance Taxed at Seventeen Shillings in the Pound, at the Arbitrary Will and Pleasure of the Venerable Mr. Woods.

The Paragraph Concludes thus: *N. B.* (that is to say *Not a bene, or Mark well*) *No Evidence appeared from Ireland or elsewhere, to prove the Mischiefs complain'd of, or any Abuses whatsoever committed in the Execution of the said Grant.*

The Impudence of this Remark exceeds all that went before. First; the House of Commons in *Ireland*, which Represents the whole People of the Kingdom; and Secondly the Privy Council, Addressed his Majesty against these Half-pence. What could be done more to express the Universal Sense and Opinion of the Nation? If his Copper were Diamonds, and the Kingdom were entirely against it, would not That be sufficient to reject it? Must a Committee of the House of Commons, and our whole Privy-Council go over to Argue *Pro* and *Con* with Mr. Wood's? To what End did

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the King give his Patent for Coyning of Half-pence in *Ireland*? Was it not because it was Represented to his Sacred Majesty, that such a Coynage would be of Advantage to the Good of this Kingdom, and of all his Subjects here? It is to the Patentee's Peril if his Representation be false, and the Execution of his Patent be Fraudulent and Corrupt. Is he so Wick-ed and Foolish to think that his Patent was given him to Ruin a Million and a Half of People, that he might be a Gainer of Three or Fourscore Thousand Pounds to himself? Before he was at the Charge of Passing a Patent, much more of Raking up so much Filthy Droſs, and Stamping it with his Majesty's *Image and Superscription*, should he not first in common Sense, in common Equity, and com-mon Manners, have Consulted the principal Party concerned; that is to say, the People of the Kingdom, the House of Lords or Commons or the Privy-Council? If any Foreigner should ask us, whose *Image and Superscription* there is in Woods his Coyn, we should be ashamed to tell him it was *Cæsar's*. In that great Want of Copper Half-pence, which he alledges we were, Our City set up our *Cæsar's* Statue in Excellent Copper, at an Expence that is Equal in Value to Thirty thousand Pounds of his Coyn. And we will not receive his *Image* in worse Metal.

I observe many of our People putting a Melancholly Case on this Subject. It is true say they we are all undone if Wood's Half-pence must pass; but what shall we do, if his Majesty puts out a *Proclamation* commanding us to take them? This hath been often Dinned in my

my Ears. But I desire my Country-men to be assured that there is nothing in it. The King never Issues out a *Proclamation* but to en-joyn what the *Law* permits him. He will not Issue out a *Proclamation* against *Law*, or if such a thing should happen by a Mistake, we are no more obliged to obey it than to run our Heads into the Fire. Besides his Majesty will never Command us by a *Proclamation*, what he does not offer to Command us in the Patent it self. There he leaves it to our Discretion, so that our Destruction must be intirely owing to our selves. Therefore let no Man be afraid of a *Proclamation*, which will never be granted; and if it should, yet upon this Occasion, will be of no Force. The King's Revenues here are near Four hundred Thousand Pounds a Year, can you think his Ministers will Advise him to take them in *VVoods's Brass*, which will reduce the Value to Fifty thousand Pounds. *England* gets a Million Sterl. by this Nation which if this Project goes on, will be almost reduc'd to Nothing: And do you thing those who Live in *England* upon *Irish Estates* will be content to take an Eighth or a Tenth Part, by being payed in *VVoods's Dross*?

If *VVoods* and his Confederates were not con-vinc'd of our Stupidity, they never would have attempted so Audacious an Enterprize. He now sees a Spirit hath been raised against him, and he only watches till it begins to Flag, he goes about watching when to Devour us. He hopes we shall be weary of contending with him, and at last out of Ignorance, or Fear, or of being perfectly Tyred with Opposition, we shall be forced to Yield. And therefore I confess it is

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my chief Endeavour to keep up your Spirits and Resentments. If I tell you there is a Precipice under you, and that if you go forwards you will certainly break your Necks. If I point to it before your Eyes, must I be at the Trouble of repeating it every Morning? Are our Peoples *Hearts waxed Gross?* Are their *Ears Dull of Hearing,* and have they closed their Eyes? I fear there are some few *Vipers* among us, who, for ten or twenty Pounds Gain, would sell their Souls and their Country, though at last it would end in their own Ruin as well as Ours. Be not like the deaf *Adder,* who refuses to bear the Voice of the *Charmer,* charm he never so wisely.

Though my Letter be Directed to you, Mr. *Harding*, yet I intend it for all my Country-men. I have no Interest in this Affair but what is common to the Publick, I can live better than many others, I have some Gold and Silver by me, and a Shop well furnished, and shall be able to make a Shift when many of my Betters are Starving. But I am grieved to see the Coldness and Indifference of many People, with whom I discourse. Some are afraid of a *Proclamation,* Others shrug up their Shoulders, and cry, what would you have us do? Some give out, there is no Danger at all. Others are comforted that it will be a common Calamity and they shall fare no worse than their Neighbours. Will a Man, who hears *Midnight-Robbers* at his Door, get out of Bed, and raise his Family for a common Defence, and shall a whole Kingdom lye in a Lethargy, while Mr. *Wood* comes at the Head of his *Confederates* to Rob them of all they have to Ruin us and our Posterity for ever? If an High-way-man meets

meets you on the Road, you give him your Money to save your Life, but, God be thanked, Mr. Woods cannot touch a Hair of your Heads. You have all the Laws of God and Man on your side. When he or his Accomplices offer you his Drofs, it is but saying *No* and you are Safe. If a Mad-man should come to my Shop with an Handful of Dirt raked out of the Kennel, and offer it in Payment for Ten Yards of Stuff, I would Pity or Laugh at him, or, if his Behaviour deserved it, Kick him out of my Doors. And if Mr. Woods come to demand any Gold or Silver, or Comodities for which I have payed my Gold and Silver, in Exchange for his Trash, can he deserve or expect better Treatment.

When the *Evil Day* is come (if it must come) let us mark and observe those who presume to offer these Half-pence in Payment. Let their Names, and Trades, and Places of Aboard be made Publick, that every one may be aware of them, as Betrayers of their Country, and Confederates with Mr. Woods. Let them be watched at Markets and Fairs, and let the First honest Discoverer give the Word about, that Woods's Half-pence have been offered, and caution the Poor innocent People not to receive them.

Perhaps I have been too Tedious; but there would never be an End, if I attempted to say all that this melancholly Subject will bear. I will Conclude with humbly offering one Proposal, which, if it were put in Practice, would blow up this Destructive Project at once. Let some Skilful Judicious Pen draw up an ADVERTISEMENT to the following Purpose. That

Whereas one William Woods Hard-ware-Man, now or lately Sojourning in the City of London, hath by many Misrepresentations, procured a Patent for Coyning an Hundred and Fourty thousand Pounds in Copper Half-pence for this Kingdom, which is a Sum Five Times greater than our Occasions require. And whereas it is Notorious that the said Woods hath Coyned his Half-pence of such base Metal and false Weight, that they are at least, Six Parts in Seven below the Real Value. And whereas we have Reason to apprehend, that the said Woods may, at any Time hereafter, clandestinely Coyn as many more Half-pence as he pleases. And whereas the said Patent neither doth nor can Oblige his Majesty's Subjects to receive the said Half-pence in any Payment, but leaves it to their Voluntary Choice, because, by Law the Subject cannot be Obliged to take any Money except Gold or Silver. And whereas, contrary to the Letter and Meaning of the said Patent, the said Woods hath Declared that every Person shall be OBLIGED to take Five-pence Half-penny of his Coin in every Payment. And whereas the House of Commons and Privy Council have severally Addressed his Most Sacred Majesty, Representing the ill Consequences which the said Coinage may have upon this Kingdom. And lastly whereas it is universally agreed, that the whole Nation to a Man (except Mr. Woods and his Confederates) are in the utmost Apprehensions of the Ruinous Consequences, that must follow from the said Coinage. Therefore we whose Names are underwritten being Persons of considerable Estates in this Kingdom, and Residors therein, do unanimously Resolue and Declare

clare that we will never receive, one Farthing or Half-penny of the said Wood's Coyning, and that we will direct all our Tenants to refuse the said Coyn from any Person whatsoever; Of which that they may not be Ignorant, we have sent them a Copy of this Advertisement, to be Read to them by our Stewards, Receivers, &c.

I could wish, that a Paper of this Nature might be drawn up, and Signed by Two or Three Hundred principal Gentlemen of this Kingdom, and Printed Copies thereof sent to their several Tenants; I am deceived, if any thing could sooner defeat this Execrable Design of Wood and his Accomplices. This would immediately give the Alarm, and set the Kingdom on their Guard. This would give Courage to the meanest Tenant and Cottager. *How long, O Lord, Righteous and True-----*

I must tell you in Particular, Mr. Harding, that you are much to blame. Several Hundred Persons have enquired at your House for me Letter to the Shop-Keepers, &c. and you had none to Sell them. Pray keep your self provided with that Letter and with this; you have got very well by the Former, but I did not then Write for your Sake, any more than I do now. Pray Advertise both in every Newspaper, and let it not be YOUR Fault or MINE, if our Country-Men will not take Warning. I desire you likewise to Sell them as Cheap as you can.

I am your Servant,

Aug. 4. 1724.

M. B.